



# News Release

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## **Corps releases Missouri River Final Environmental Impact Statement, Draft Revised Master Manual and Draft Final 2004 Annual Operating Plan**

OMAHA – The Army Corps of Engineers released today for public comment its Final Environmental Impact Statement for the operation of the Missouri River dams and reservoirs. Also released were the Draft Revised Master Water Control Manual and the Draft Final 2004 Annual Operating Plan. The Master Manual sets forth the guidelines for the operation of the Corps' six main stem dams on the Missouri River.

"We believe the preferred alternative in this Final Environmental Impact Statement and water control plan in the revised Master Manual is the best balance for serving the multiple purposes of the reservoir system as authorized by Congress, meets the Corps' trust and treaty obligations to federally recognized tribes, and complies with the environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act," said Brig. Gen. William Grisoli, Northwestern Division Engineer.

"The release of these documents today brings us one step closer to completion of a long-range program for the operation of the Missouri River," said General Grisoli.

"We must maintain our flexibility to meet all of the congressionally authorized purposes while complying with the Endangered Species Act.

"Our immediate goal is to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop the amount of habitat that will allow this year's operation for minimum navigation service and provide for other uses such as water supply, water quality and recreation, he added."

"In addition, this basin has been subjected to two serious droughts since 1967. In our revised plans, we are recommending conservation measures to better save water earlier in a drought; resulting in reduced impacts to the public.

"The Corps of Engineers is committed to improving the survival of the species, providing predictability to the basin, and lessening the impact of severe drought by retaining more water in the reservoirs."

The lengthy Final Environmental Impact Statement and revised Master Manual describe new drought conservation measures that save water in the reservoirs earlier in a drought than under the current water control plan and unbalances storage in the three biggest reservoirs to benefit both endangered species and game and forage fish.

Also proposed is a comprehensive set of measures to help recover protected species. The President's budget for next year includes \$69 million for habitat improvement along the Missouri River. As a result of these measures, the Corps can also provide predictability for river operation and allow the Corps to meet the congressionally authorized purposes of flood control, hydropower, irrigation, navigation, recreation, water quality, water supply and fish and wildlife.

The preferred alternative and comprehensive recovery plan embrace prudent operational changes based on existing sound scientific and engineering principles and practices, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation, and adaptive management initiatives involving basin stakeholders.

"Public participation in the proposed Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee will be critical to such efforts to recover these protect species," said General Grisoli. "We want to hear from the public because the Corps, as an honest broker, must serve the Nation and its citizens in protecting one of our national treasures – the Missouri River."

To comply with the court order, the public comment period on the Final Environmental Impact Statement is reduced to 14 days, from March 5 to March 19. Comments will be accepted in writing and via e-mail. Send written comments to: Master Manual Project Manager, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144. Send e-mail comments to: [mastermanual@usace.army.mil](mailto:mastermanual@usace.army.mil).

The FEIS, summary and comments and responses on the draft EIS are available on the Northwestern Division website at: [www.nwd.usace.army.mil](http://www.nwd.usace.army.mil). Also available are the draft Revised Master Manual and the draft of the Final 2004 Annual Operating Plan based on the new Master Manual as well as the link to make comments on the FEIS.